

The Right to Hear

Barring an internationally known Belgian economist from the United States on the ground that he is a Marxist is an insult to the college professors and students in this country who want to see him as well as hear him in an atmosphere allowing for the free interplay of ideas.

Dr. Ernest E. Mandel, editor of *La Gauche* and author of "Marxist Economic Theory," was refused a visa last year under the exclusion section of the McCarran-Walter Act. This vestige of the restrictive nineteen-fifties era particularly strikes at teachers and writers for advocacy of and affiliations with leftwing causes. As a result, Dr. Mandel and his hosts had to cancel lectures at Columbia, Princeton, Amherst and other colleges. The Government was made to look silly because Stanford University heard him anyway via a trans-Atlantic phone hook-up.

On a previous visit to this country, Dr. Mandel had unwittingly broken a "rule" banning discussion of Communist economic doctrines. The fact that he was one of the outspoken critics of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia apparently had no effect on the State Department. Now a group of professors from six American institutions has called upon the Attorney General in Federal District Court to give the reasons why Dr. Mandel cannot be admitted for lectures and debates this spring or fall. He has again applied for a visa. Instead of simply citing the immigration law, the Attorney General is being asked to explain the nature of the criteria for preventing free scholarly exchange. This could clarify—and expose—the law's shortcomings.

Congress ought to re-examine and eliminate restrictions that in effect merely try to deny entry of ideas into this country. In the present atmosphere, a change in the immigration law covering political exclusion would be too much to expect soon. But the Attorney General could avoid further embarrassment to the United States by following the advice of Secretary of State Rogers, who disassociated himself from the ban last year. Dr. Mandel should be allowed to speak here so that he can be heard—and challenged.

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